a game of you

part five

gaiman • mcmanus talbot • woch

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the SANDMAN™

SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

THE LAND.

POPPA WAS SO PROUD OF THIS LITTLE FISH.

THIRD PRIZE
1967 BASS FISHING TOURNAMENT

IT WAS THE ONLY THING HE EVER WON A PRIZE FOR.

THIS ISN'T ANY CITADEL OF THE CUCKOO. THIS IS WHERE I GREW UP. THIS IS OUR OLD HOUSE.

IT'S JUST LIKE I REMEMBER IT, ONLY SMALLER...

AND THE BRIGHTLY SHINING SEA ISN'T ANY BRIGHTLY SHINING SEA.

IT'S THE ATLANTIC OCEAN, EARLY IN THE MORNING, AFTER THE SUN'S BURNED THE CLOUDS AWAY AND BEFORE IT'S RISEN TOO HIGH IN THE SKY, AT THE MOMENT WHEN THE SUN-LIGHT TURNS THE SEA TO SILVER.

DAPPLED, GLINTING, MAGICAL SILVER...

AS IF THE LIGHT WASN'T REFLECTED; RATHER AS IF THE SEA SHONE WITH ITS OWN WONDERFUL LIGHT, GLITTERING AND SPARKLING LIKE LIQUID DIAMONDS...

WHEN I WAS A LITTLE GIRL I USED TO RUN DOWN THE SAND AND INTO THE SEA, AND I'D TRY TO PICK UP THE SHINING SILVER WATER.

I'D CUP MY HANDS AND CATCH IT, BUT IT ALWAYS TURNED BACK INTO DIRTY GRAY-GREEN SEA-WATER...

WELL, THAT'S WHAT MAKES THAT THE BRIGHTLY SHINING SEA.

IT STAYS LIQUID DIAMONDS WHEN YOU PICK IT UP.

AND IT DOESN'T TASTE SALTY, EITHER.

IT TASTES KIND OF LIKE GRAPE JUICE.

YOU... WERE READING... MY *MIND*...?

NO.

I JUST KNEW WHAT YOU WERE THINKING. IT WASN'T *THAT* HARD.

I *KNOW* YOU...

OF COURSE YOU DO, SILLY.

...WHO ARE YOU?

HMM. I'LL GIVE YOU A ***CLUE***. THE SCAR ON YOUR KNEE.

YOU'D TOLD THE KIDS NEXT DOOR THAT YOU COULD FLY, AND THEY DIDN'T BELIEVE YOU, AND YOU...

I'D BEEN LYING SO HARD I'D CONVINCED ***MYSELF*** I WAS TELLING THEM THE TRUTH.

I JUMPED OFF THE ROOF. NEEDED TWO STITCHES. YES, *I* REMEMBER.

LOOK.

YOU'RE *ME*.

NOT *QUITE*. I'M PART OF YOU. SORT OF. YOU CREATED ME. KIND OF.

I'M THE CUCKOO.

Written by Neil Gaiman, art by Shawn McManus; additional art by Bryan Talbot and Stan Woch, colored by Daniel Vozzo, lettered by Todd Klein, edited by Karen Berger, assisted by Alisa Kwitney.

SANDMAN features characters created by Gaiman, Kieth and Dringenberg.

5: Over the Sea to Sky

BUT...

YOU--*YOU* MADE THEM KILL WILKINSON. YOU WERE THE ONE WHO DID ALL THOSE THINGS.

IT'S BECAUSE OF *YOU* MARTIN TENBONES IS DEAD.

BECAUSE OF US, PRINCESS BARBARA.

BECAUSE OF *US*.

LIKE I SAID: I'M ALMOST YOU.

WHAT *IS* THIS? SOME KIND OF MOMENT OF REVELATION? LIKE IN THE BOOKS?

IS THIS WHERE I FIND OUT I WAS ABUSED AS A CHILD AND I'VE BEEN BLOCKING IT ALL THESE YEARS?

IS THAT WHAT YOU ARE?

YOU WEREN'T ABUSED AS A CHILD, BARBARA. YOUR CHILDHOOD WAS DULL, QUIET AND BORING. YOU HAD TWO DULL PARENTS, AND A DULL HOUSE.

AND AN OVERACTIVE IMAGINATION.

THAT WORRIED YOUR PARENTS.

YOU'D MAKE UP STORIES, SEEK OUT BOOKS OF WITCHES AND GHOSTS--THINGS THAT JUST WEREN'T *TRUE*. THEY COULDN'T UNDERSTAND WHERE THIS FASCINATION OF YOURS FOR THE FANTASTIC CAME FROM AND IT *SCARED* THEM.

SO YOU BEGAN TO *DEFEND* YOURSELF.

BOYS AND GIRLS ARE DIFFERENT, YOU KNOW THAT?

LITTLE BOYS HAVE FANTASIES IN WHICH THEY'RE FASTER, OR SMARTER, OR ABLE TO FLY.

WHERE THEY HIDE THEIR FACES IN SECRET IDENTITIES, AND LISTEN TO THE PEOPLE WHO DESPISE THEM ADMIRING THEIR REMARKABLE DEEDS.

PATHETIC, BESPECTACLED, REJECTED PERRY PORTER IS SECRETLY *THE AMAZING SPIDER*. GAWKY, BESPECTACLED, UNLOVED CLINT CLARKE IS REALLY *HYPERMAN*. *YES?*

WHAT HAS *THIS* GOT TO DO WITH--?

SHUSH.

NOW, LITTLE **GIRLS**, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAVE DIFFERENT FANTASIES. MUCH LESS CONVOLUTED. THEIR PARENTS ARE NOT THEIR PARENTS. THEIR LIVES ARE NOT THEIR LIVES.

THEY ARE **PRINCESSES.**

LOST PRINCESSES FROM DISTANT LANDS.

AND ONE DAY THE KING AND QUEEN, THEIR **REAL** PARENTS, WILL TAKE THEM BACK TO THEIR LAND, AND THEN THEY'LL BE HAPPY FOR EVER AND EVER.

LITTLE CUCKOOS.

DID I DREAM **THAT?** I DON'T REMEMBER...

SURE YOU DID. YOU MADE UP A MAGIC LAND, AND YOU POPULATED IT WITH YOUR TOYS.

Barbara's ROOM

...TOYS?

YEAH. THEY'RE ALL IN HERE. IN THE SHRINE. COME ON IN.

THIS IS MY **BEDROOM.**

THAT'S RIGHT.

AND **THIS** IS MARTIN TENBONES. AND **HERE'S** WILKINSON. AND HERE'S LUZ.

HERE'S PRINADO.

HERE'S **YOU.**

TOYS. MY **TOYS.** I'D FORGOTTEN THEM.

NO YOU HADN'T. NOT DEEP DOWN. AND THEY **NEVER** FORGOT YOU.

IS THIS REAL? OR IS IT JUST MY IMAGINATION?

IF YOU TELL ME WHAT THE DIFFERENCE IS, I MIGHT BE ABLE TO TELL YOU.

I...

I WANT A DRINK OF WATER.

WELL, YOU LEFT YOURSELF WIDE OPEN FOR ME, REALLY. I MEAN, REALLY.

IT'S A LITTLE LIKE POSSESSION. ONLY I DIDN'T BOTHER WITH YOUR BODY.

I MOVED INTO YOUR DREAMWORLD. INTO THOSE PARTS OF YOUR LIFE YOU WEREN'T USING. YOU WERE EVERY-THING I NEEDED.

I'M YOUR IMAGINARY FIEND.

SO, BARBIE. NOW THAT I'VE EXPLAINED IT TO YOU, IT ALL MAKES PERFECT SENSE, DOESN'T IT?

...SURE.

NOW, THINK CAREFULLY BECAUSE THIS IS A **BIG** THING I'M ASKING YOU.

DO YOU **LIKE** ME?

MM HM.

AND I'VE GOT A **RIGHT** TO **LIVE**, HAVEN'T I? AND TO BE **HAPPY**?

OF COURSE YOU HAVE...

AND I'M AWFUL SWEET, AREN'T I? I'M **AWFUL** CUTE.

YOU'RE... CUTE... AS A...

...BUTTON...

BARBIE...YOU WOULDN'T MIND IT, IF I HAD TO KILL YOU? I MEAN COMPLETELY DESTROY YOU?

I NEED TO. AND IT WOULD MAKE ME REALLY HAPPY.

...SURE...

OH GOOD.

EVERY-THING'S FINE.

IT WAS EASY.

I WANT HER TAKEN DOWN TO THE ISLE OF THORNS.

WE START AT MOONRISE.

NEW YORK.

THAT WAS THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS WITH "THE NIGHTGOWN OF THE SULLEN MOON," AND THIS IS BARBARA WONG WITH YOU UNTIL DAWN WITH MUSIC, PHONE-IN, NEWS AND WEATHER. HELL, THIS TIME A THE MORNING I DO EVERY-THING AROUND HERE INCLUDING MAKE THE COFFEE.

YOU OUT THERE, NIGHTOWLS? BECAUSE I WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU IF YOU ARE.

TALKING ABOUT COFFEE, I'M GOING TO POUR ME A CUP WHILE I WAIT FOR THE LIGHTS ON THE PHONE TO START FLASHING. BE BACK, RIGHT AFTER THIS MESSAGE...

HEY BILL?

YEAH JERRY.

YOU GOT ANY Q-TIPS ON YA?

NOPE JERRY. NO Q-TIPS.

AW HECK... BUT WHAT'S THAT? ISN'T THAT A PACK OF Q-TIPS?

NAW WHAT I GOT'S BETTER THAN Q-TIPS. IT'S WUNDABUDS. FROM THE MAKERS OF WUNDAWOOL.

NOT Q-TIPS, JERRY. WUNDABUDS.

I'LL NEVER USE UNFLAVORED Q-TIPS AGAIN, BILL.

YES JERRY, WUNDABUDS ARE STERILE, ALL-AMERICAN, AND FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY 99 CENTS A PACK. NEW WUNDABUDS IN FRESHMINT, CINNAMON AND NEW SALSA FLAVORS.

WOW BILL.

BARBARA WONG LATE NIGHT ON WRAT NEW YORK, 3:47 A.M. AND YOU'RE ON THE LINE, CALLER.

YEAH, BARBARA? I'M DOWN ON THE LOWER EAST SIDE AND I'M CALLIN' TO SAY THAT I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE HEY'S GOING ON DOWN HERE BUT WE GOT WAVES LIKE YOU WOULDN' BELIEVE.

AND WHAT'S YOUR NAME, CALLER?

JIM. JIM MORRISON. NOT THE FAMOUS ONE.

HEY, WOULDN'T THAT BE A COUP FOR MY SHOW IF YOU WERE? SO WHAT'S YOUR POINT, JIM?

I THINK MAYBE IT'S THAT HURRICANE THEY WAS TALKIN' ABOUT ON THE NEWS. I THINK MAYBE IT'S HEADIN' BACK THIS WAY.

WELL, MISTER JIM-BUT-NOT-THE-FAMOUS-DEAD-ONE-MORRISON, DON'T YOU THINK THAT IF THERE WERE EVEN THE TEENIEST CHANCE THAT HURRICANE LISA WAS HEADING BACK THIS WAY THE METEOROLOGISTS--

--THAT'S WEATHER FORECASTERS TO ALL OUR LISTENERS FROM NEW JERSEY--

--WOULD'VE WARNED US? NO CHANCE. BUT THANKS FOR CALLING...

BARBARA WONG UNTIL 6:00 A.M. ON WRAT.

IDENTITY BLURS ON THE MOON'S ROAD.

I AM HAZEL McNAMARA.

I AM THESSALY.

I AM DONNA CAVANAGH.

I AM FOXGLOVE.

I AM JOHNNY McNAMARA'S BIG SISTER.

I AM A WITCH-WOMAN OF THE LOWLANDS.

I AM JUDY'S EX-LOVER.

I AM...

I...

IN THE PALE LIGHT OF THE MOON I PLAY THE GAME OF YOU.

WHOEVER I AM.

WHOEVER YOU ARE.

ALL SENSE OF WHERE I AM, OF WHO I AM AND WHERE I'M GOING, HAS BEEN SWALLOWED BY THE DARK.

AND I WALK THROUGH THE STARS AND SKY...

A TRINITY OF DREAMS BENEATH THE MOON.

WHERE AM I?

WE... WHERE ARE WE?

WE ARE...

WE ARE.

WE ARE IN A *DREAM*.

AN OLD DREAM, I'D SAY--IT'S VERY SOLID.

WE'RE IN BARBIE'S DREAM?

I SUPPOSE...

IT'S MUCH OLDER THAN BARBIE, THOUGH. MY GUESS IS THAT IT'S SOMEWHERE SHE COMES TO DREAM, BUT I DOUBT SHE CREATED IT.

HOW DO YOU *KNOW* ALL THIS STUFF, THESSALY?

I'M OLDER THAN I LOOK, FOXGLOVE. YOU PICK STUFF UP AS YOU GO ALONG. YOU KNOW.

YEAH? HOW OLD *ARE* YOU?

I'M REALLY PRETTY OLD. LET'S LEAVE IT THERE, HUH?

SO, WELL, NOW WE'RE HERE, WE'D BETTER START LOOKING FOR BARBIE.

THE *CUCKOO*. WE FIND THE CUCKOO.

BUT BARBIE...

BARBIE DIDN'T TRY TO HURT ME. THE CUCKOO *DID*. I'M HERE TO FIND THE CUCKOO.

I'M SURE WE'LL RUN INTO BARBIE ALONG THE WAY. THAT'S HOW THESE THINGS USUALLY SEEM TO WORK OUT. BUT *I'M* LOOKING FOR THE CUCKOO.

IT NEEDS TO BE TAUGHT A LESSON.

BUT, THESSALY...

WE DON'T *NEED* TO KNOW WHERE WE'RE GOING. THIS IS A DREAM-WORLD, FOXGLOVE. IT HAS ITS OWN LAWS, ITS OWN LOGIC. IT *NEEDS* TO BRING US TOGETHER.

UH-UH.

BUT THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE...

HAZEL? WHAT'S THE MATTER?

IT'S A *BODY*. SOME SORT OF GIANT RAT, IN A... UM. RAINCOAT.

IT'S NOT BEEN DEAD LONG.

GOOD.

IT CAN GIVE US DIRECTIONS.

YOU--YOU AREN'T GOING TO CUT ITS *FACE* OFF, ARE YOU?

NO. NO NEED. BUT I'LL NEED SOME PEBBLES.

PEBBLES?

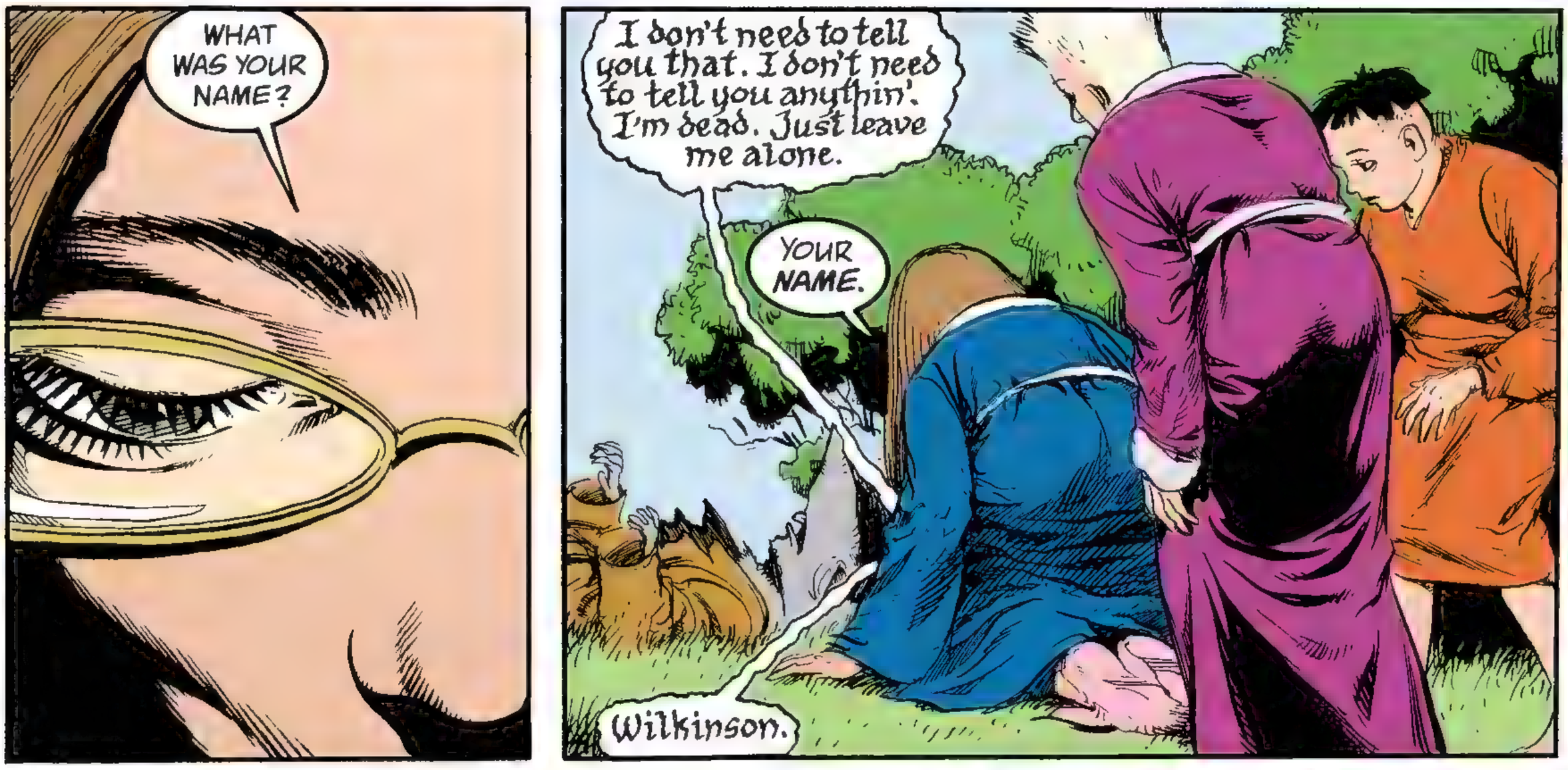
MM-HM. ROUNDISH ONES.

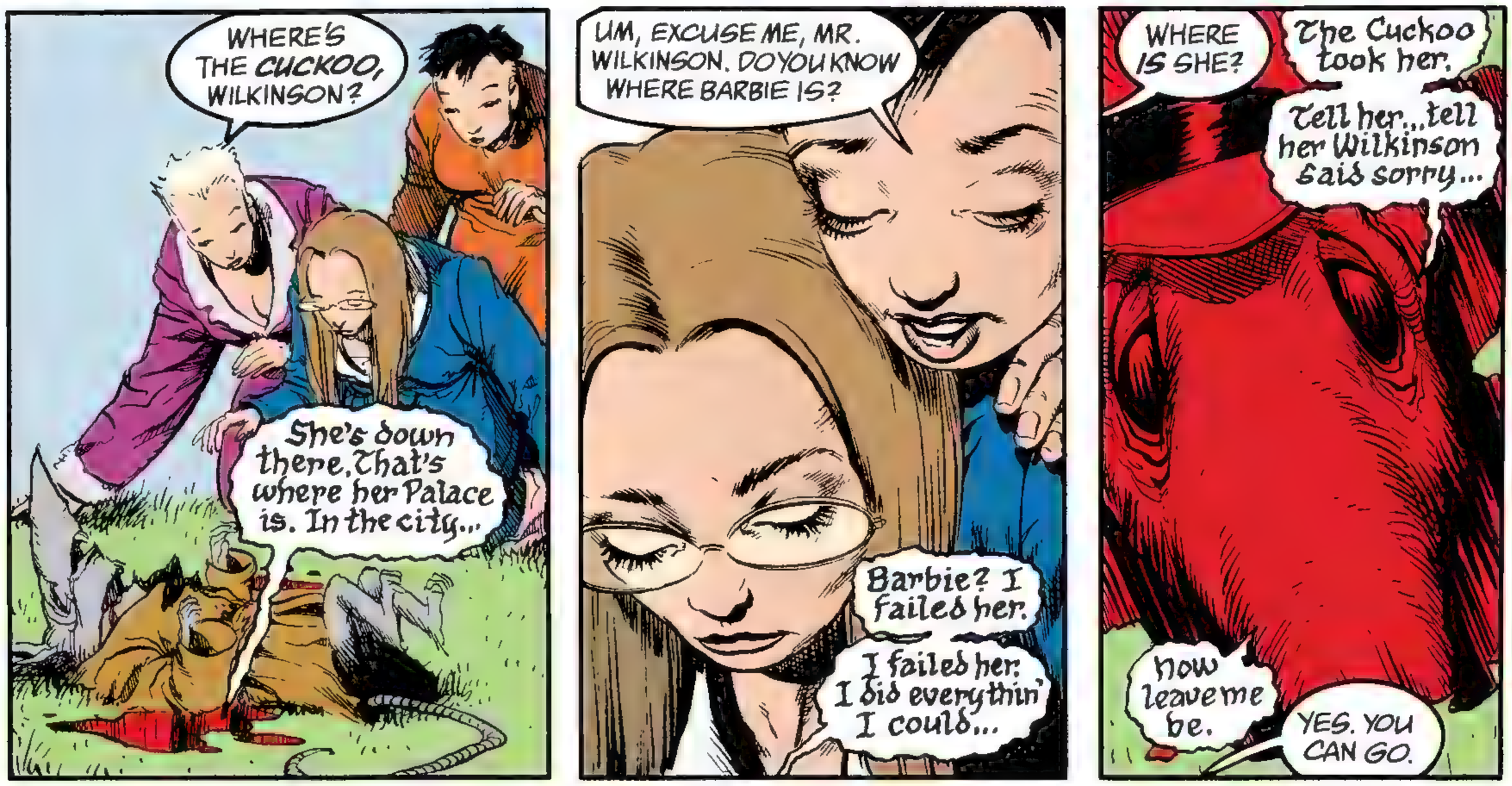
THERE.

NOW WE NEED A LITTLE BLOOD.

DON'T *WORRY*-- IT'LL BE MINE.

I'm dead. Bugger off.
HELLO?


WHAT WAS YOUR NAME?
I don't need to tell you that. I don't need to tell you anythin'. I'm dead. Just leave me alone.
YOUR NAME.
Wilkinson.


WHERE'S THE CUCKOO, WILKINSON?
She's down there. That's where her Palace is. In the city...
UM, EXCUSE ME, MR. WILKINSON. DO YOU KNOW WHERE BARBIE IS?
Barbie? I failed her.
I failed her. I did everythin' I could...
WHERE IS SHE?
The Cuckoo took her.
Tell her... tell her Wilkinson said sorry...
How leave me be.
YES. YOU CAN GO.

WHAT A SWEET LITTLE GUY. LOTS NICER THAN GEORGE.

MM. WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT CUCKOOS?

THEY'RE BIRDS.

YEAH.

THAT'S ALL?

SOME CUCKOOS LAY THEIR EGGS IN OTHER BIRDS' NESTS.

SO?

THEY JUST DO. THAT'S ALL.

YOU ARE PREGNANT, AREN'T YOU?

WELL I HAVEN'T DONE A TEST OR ANYTHING. I MEAN, I DIDN'T GET ROUND TO IT YET. NOT THAT I'M WORRIED ABOUT KILLING RABBITS BECAUSE YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THAT ANYMORE--

HAZEL. SHUT THE HELL UP.

SORRY.

SHITHEAD.

IF WE *EVER* GET HOME AGAIN, I'M GOING TO, I DON'T KNOW. *SCREAM* AT YOU. THROW THINGS ACROSS THE ROOM. I'M GOING TO CALL YOU NAMES YOU NEVER EVEN *KNEW* I KNEW...

I'M SORRY...

WHAT *KIND* OF RELATIONSHIP DID WE *HAVE*, FOR CHRISSAKES?

YOU'RE *DUMB*, YOU KNOW THAT? DUMB AND SELFISH AND, AND, DECEITFUL, AND SECRETIVE, AND--AND--AND-- *DUMB*.

OH...

SHIT.

DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH A BABY'S GOING TO *COST* US?

snf?

FOR A START, WE HAVE TO BUY ONE OF THOSE DUMB BOOKS FULL OF NAMES...

FOX?

FOX, I *DO* LOVE YOU.

DAMN STRAIGHT YOU DO. *JERK*.

LISTEN TO THAT WIND.

BRRRR.

I WOULDN'T WANT TO BE OUTSIDE ON A NIGHT LIKE THIS...

THIS IS THE KIND OF NIGHT THAT NEEDS A ROARING LOG FIRE, A LEOPARD-SKIN RUG, A BOTTLE OF FINE BRANDY, AND, MM. I DUNNO.

RUTGER HAUER, MAYBE.

AND THE THIRD *VELVET UNDERGROUND* LP IN THE BACKGROUND.

INSTEAD I'VE GOT A SEVERED FACE AND SLEEPING BEAUTY FOR COMPANY.

UH MISS WANDA. I THINK MISS BARBARA'S UH HAVING SOME UH DIFFICULTIES.

YEAH, GEORGE? LIKE WHAT?

I UH DON'T KNOW. BUT THE LIGHT OF THE STONE WAS FLICKERING...

JEEZUS. SO WHAT DOES *THAT* MEAN?

I UH WISH I KNEW.

C'MON, PRINCESS BARBIE, HANG IN THERE. C'MON, BUBULLEH. I'VE LOST *TOO* MANY FRIENDS IN THE LAST FEW YEARS.

NOT *YOU*.

C'MON, PRINCESS.

HEE HEE HEE.

HEEHEHHEHHEEEHHEEEEE.

WHAT'S SO FUNNY, GEORGE?

YOU'RE THE PRINCESS AND THE QUEEN. HEE HEE HEE. GET IT? UH THE *PRINCESS* AND THE UH *QUEEN*.

HEEHEE.

YOU KNOW, DEATH REALLY HASN'T IMPROVED YOU ONE LITTLE BIT, GEORGE.

JESUS H. CHRIST. LISTEN TO THAT *WIND*. I HAVEN'T HEARD ANYTHING LIKE THAT SINCE I WAS A LITTLE *KID*...

CRASH!

WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?

UH IT CAME FROM OUTSIDE.

THERE'S A PERSON DOWN THERE.

I THINK SHE'S HURT.

HEY! LADY!

ARE YOU OKAY?

I'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING.

Barbie

GEORGE, KEEP AN EYE ON BARBIE. DON'T GO ANYWHERE.

UH OH VERY FUNNY I UH DON'T THINK. MY JOKE WAS UH FUNNIER.

SHIT.

HEY! ARE YOU OKAY?

I TWISTED MY LEG WHEN I FELL. IT HURTS.

NUTS.

OKAY. EASY NOW.

I GOT GARBAGE ALL OVER ME. ALL OVER. STINKING GARBAGE.

ALL OVER ME.

WELL, LET'S JUST GET YOU OUT OF THE WIND UNTIL WE CAN GET YOU TO A DOCTOR.

OKAY, NOW, CAREFUL UP THESE STEPS.

LEAN INTO THE WIND, OKAY? OR ELSE WE'LL BOTH BLOW OVER...

LOOK, MAYBE I SHOULD LEAVE YOU HERE. IT'LL BE REALLY TOUGH ON YOU GOING UPSTAIRS IF YOUR LEG IS HURT.

'S YOUR CALL, LADY. YOU'RE THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

THIS IS A CITY OF CRAZIES. YOU KNOW THAT?

JESUS. YOU REALLY DO STINK.

I'D LET YOU USE GEORGE'S SHOWER, BUT THERE'S A CORPSE IN THE BATHTUB WITH ITS FACE CUT OFF. I DON'T BELIEVE I JUST SAID THAT.

THAT MEAN WIND OUT THERE. IT'S ONLY JUST BEGUN. YOU KNOW THAT?

"IT'S JUST GOIN' TO GET WORSE."

"WELL, LUZ, NOT MUCH LONGER NOW."

"No, my lady."

"DOES THAT MAKE YOU HAPPY?"

"Very happy, my lady."

"BECAUSE YOU WANT TO PROTECT ME. YOU WANT TO HELP ME. YOU WANT TO MAKE ME HAPPY."

"Yes, lady."

IT'S TIME FOR ME TO FLY THE NEST. EVERYONE HAS TO GROW UP *SOME* TIME...

I'LL MISS THIS LAND. I REALLY *WILL*. IT'S A NICE PLACE.

We'll miss you too, lady.

WILL YOU, LUZ? THAT'S SWEET.

ESPECIALLY SINCE YOU'VE SPENT THE LAST HALF DOZEN YEARS PLOTTING MY DOWNFALL...

I was misguided, lady.

OF *COURSE* YOU WERE. AND IT JUST TOOK A LITTLE TALK TO SHOW YOU THE ERROR OF YOUR WAYS.

MMPH.

"INDEED A BIRD WILL BROOD THE FOSTER-CHICK WHILST HER OWN INFANTS LIE SLOWLY DYING OUTSIDE THE NEST..."

SHE *NEVER* UNDERSTOOD. SHE KEPT TRYING TO TELL HERSELF THE TRUTH, AND SHE *NEVER* LISTENED.

THEY DIVIDE THEMSELVES UP INTO SUCH COMPLEX PUZZLES, LITTLE BIRD...

SHE WAS THE PERFECT ENVIRONMENT TO GROW IN...

BUT WE *CANNOT* BE CHILDREN FOREVER. ALL GOOD THINGS MUST END...

AND HERE IS WHERE THEY STOP, IN THE ISLE OF THORNS...

AT THE PLACE OF THE HIEROGRAM.

AT MOONRISE. VERY *VERY* SOON.

DID YOU EVER MEET THE HIEROMANCER, LUZ?

No, lady.

SWEET OLD GUY. I THINK BARBIE MAY HAVE BASED HIM ON HER GRANDFATHER, WHEN SHE POPULATED THE LAND.

HE UNDERSTOOD THE HIEROGRAM.

IT'S OLDER THAN BARBIE. MUCH OLDER... IT'S OLD AS THE LAND.

THERE MUST BE *HUNDREDS* OF THESE LANDS, LITTLE BIRD. *THOUSANDS* OF THEM. AN ARCHIPELAGO OF DREAM-ISLANDS-- A GLITTERING SHOAL OF WORLDS.

COME ON, COME ON... *SET*, DAMN YOU...

LITTLE BARBIE FOUND THE LAND SHE NEEDED... AND THE LAND FOUND SOMEONE TO BELIEVE IN IT...

AND THEN I HAD TO COME ALONG AND SPOIL EVERYTHING.

OR THAT'S WHAT THE HIEROMANCER CLAIMED, WHEN I PUT HIM TO THE QUESTION.

BUT IT'S NOT IMPORTANT WHAT THE LAND IS. ONLY HOW TO LEAVE IT.

I'M READY TO LEAVE THE NEST.

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT IT'S *LIKE* TO BE PHYSICALLY CONFINED TO ONE TINY PLACE WHEN THERE ARE SO MANY *OTHER* PLACES I COULD BE...

THERE ARE *REAL* WORLDS OUT THERE: LITTLE ONES, LIKE THE ONE BARBIE INHABITS WHEN SHE'S AWAKE, AND HUGE, MARVELOUS WORLDS BEYOND *THEM*...

I'M CONSTRICTED HERE, LUZ.

I NEED TO *FLY*.

BUT I'M STUCK HERE, UNTIL THE END OF THIS WORLD.

IN A WAY, I'M PLEASED THAT THE GEORGE AND THE SENDINGS FAILED SO MISERABLY.

IT WILL BE SO MUCH MORE SATISFYING TO DESTROY THE PORPENTINE MYSELF. AND THIS *IS* THE PLACE TO DO IT...

THE HIEROMANCER KNEW. KNEW A *LITTLE*.

AND HE TOLD ME EVERYTHING HE KNEW, BEFORE HE DIED...

WELL, NOW IT'S JUST YOU AND ME, LITTLE BIRD LUZ.

Murphy be praised, lady--I only live to serve you.

YES. YOU DO. AND NOT FOR MUCH LONGER.

My lady? We have guests.

THESSALY? UM, THESSALY?

ARE YOU SURE THIS IS THE RIGHT PLACE?

THESSALY?

I'M SURE.

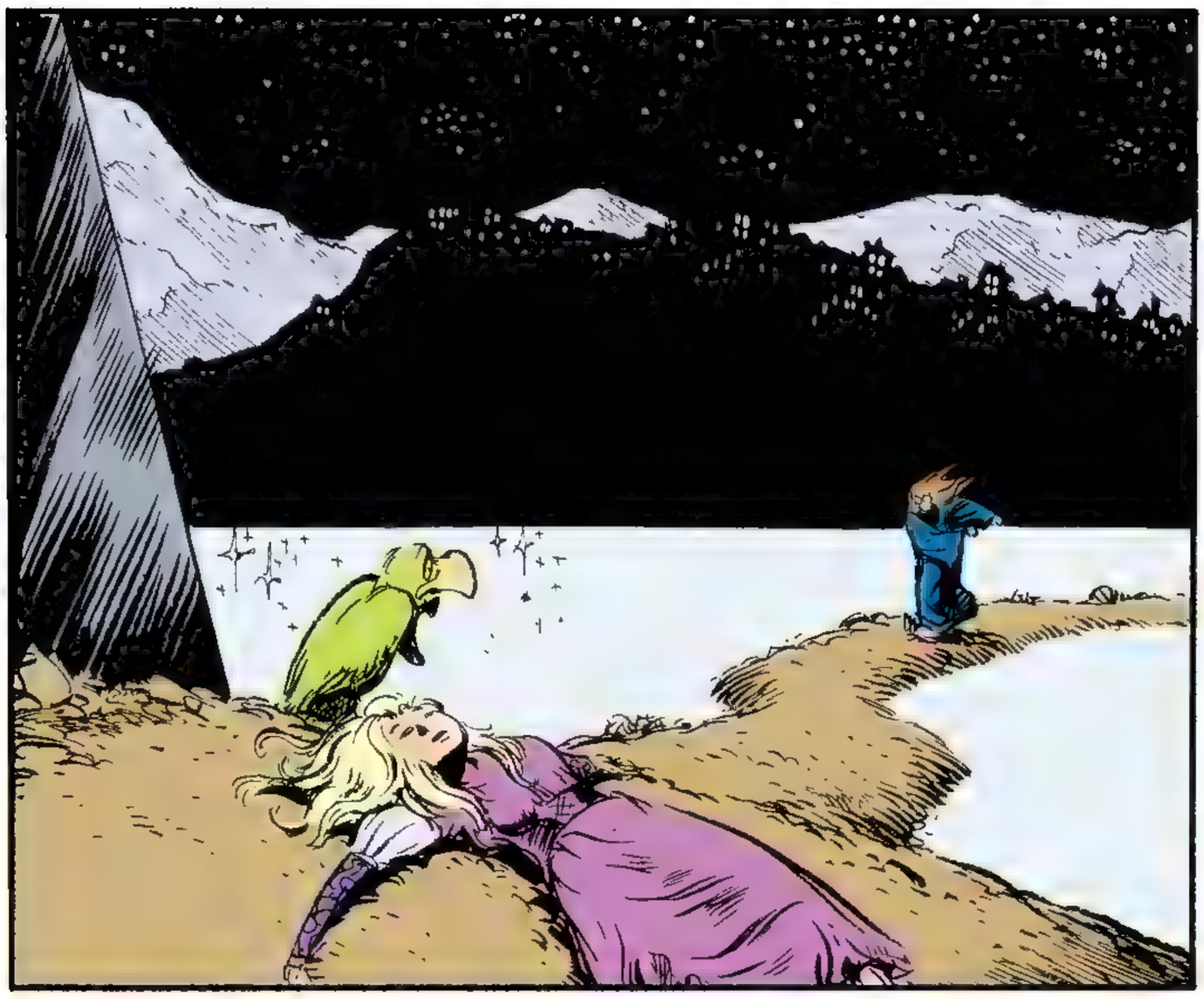
HELP! PLEASE! HELP ME!

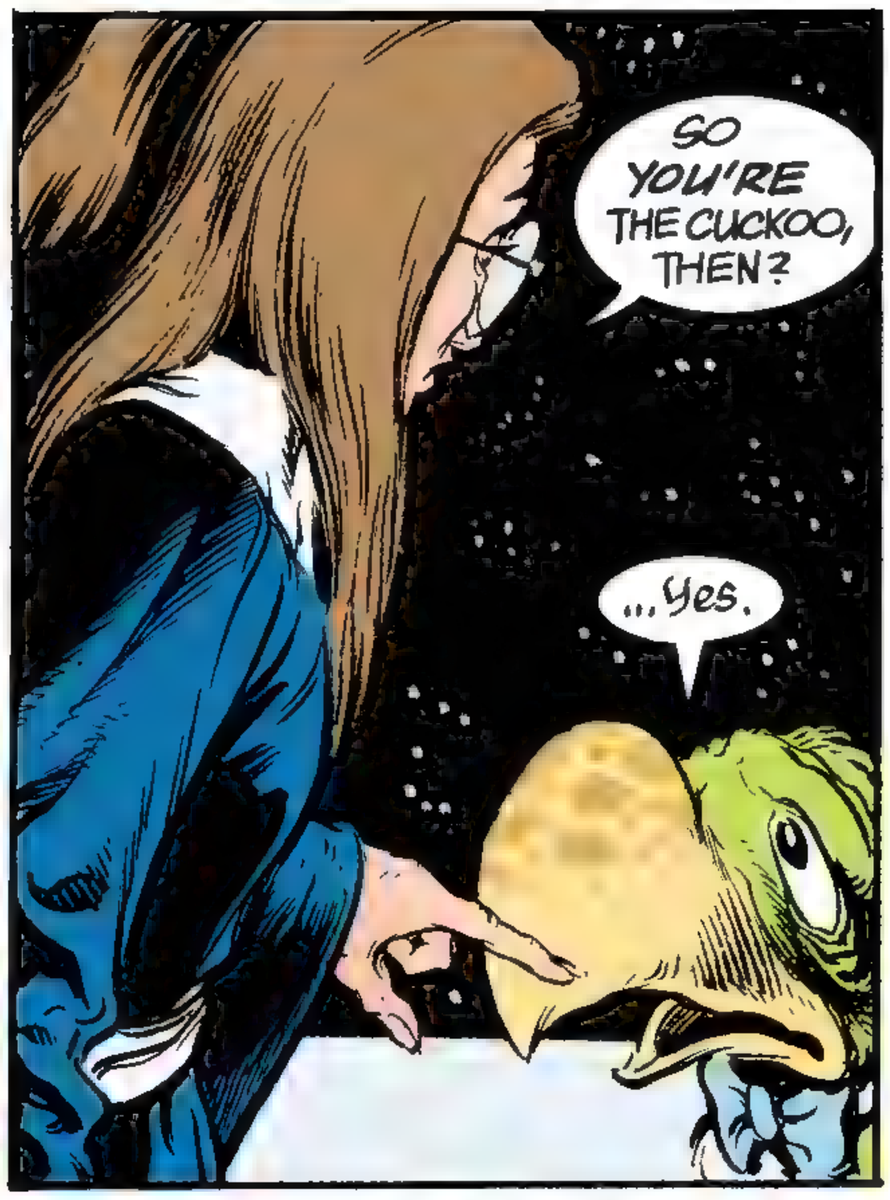
OH, I'M SO PLEASED YOU'RE HERE!

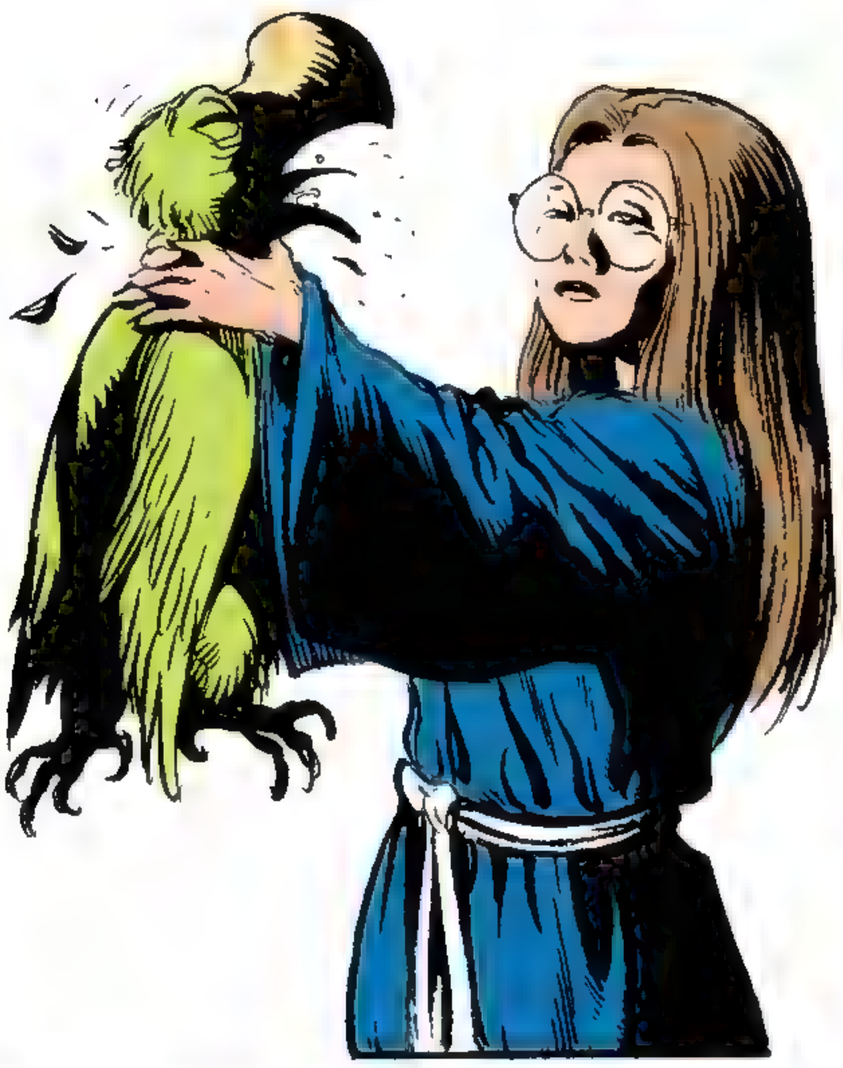
IT'S TERRIBLE! THE CUCKOO'S GOT PRINCESS BARBIE!

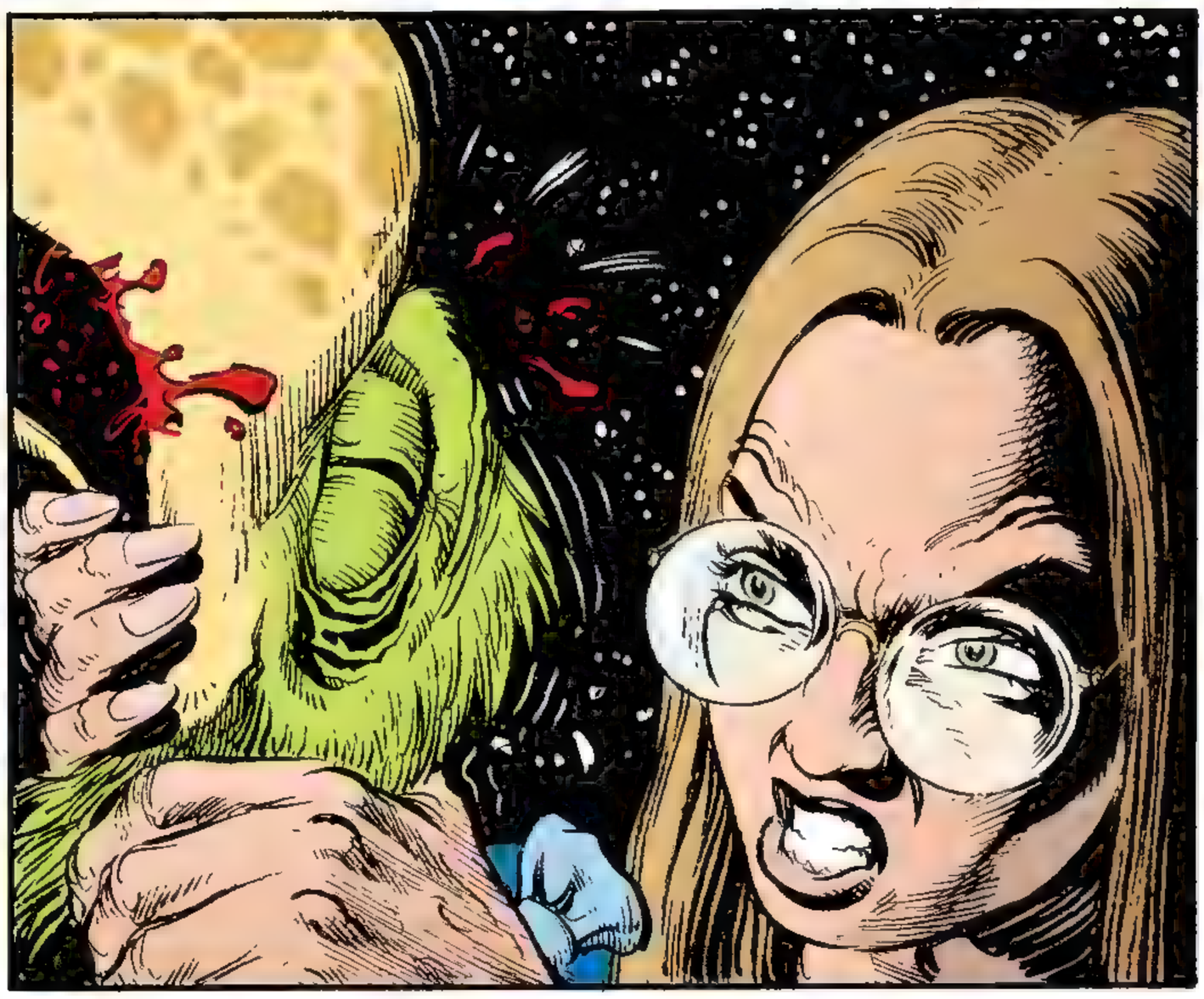
LOOK-- THEY'RE OVER THERE.

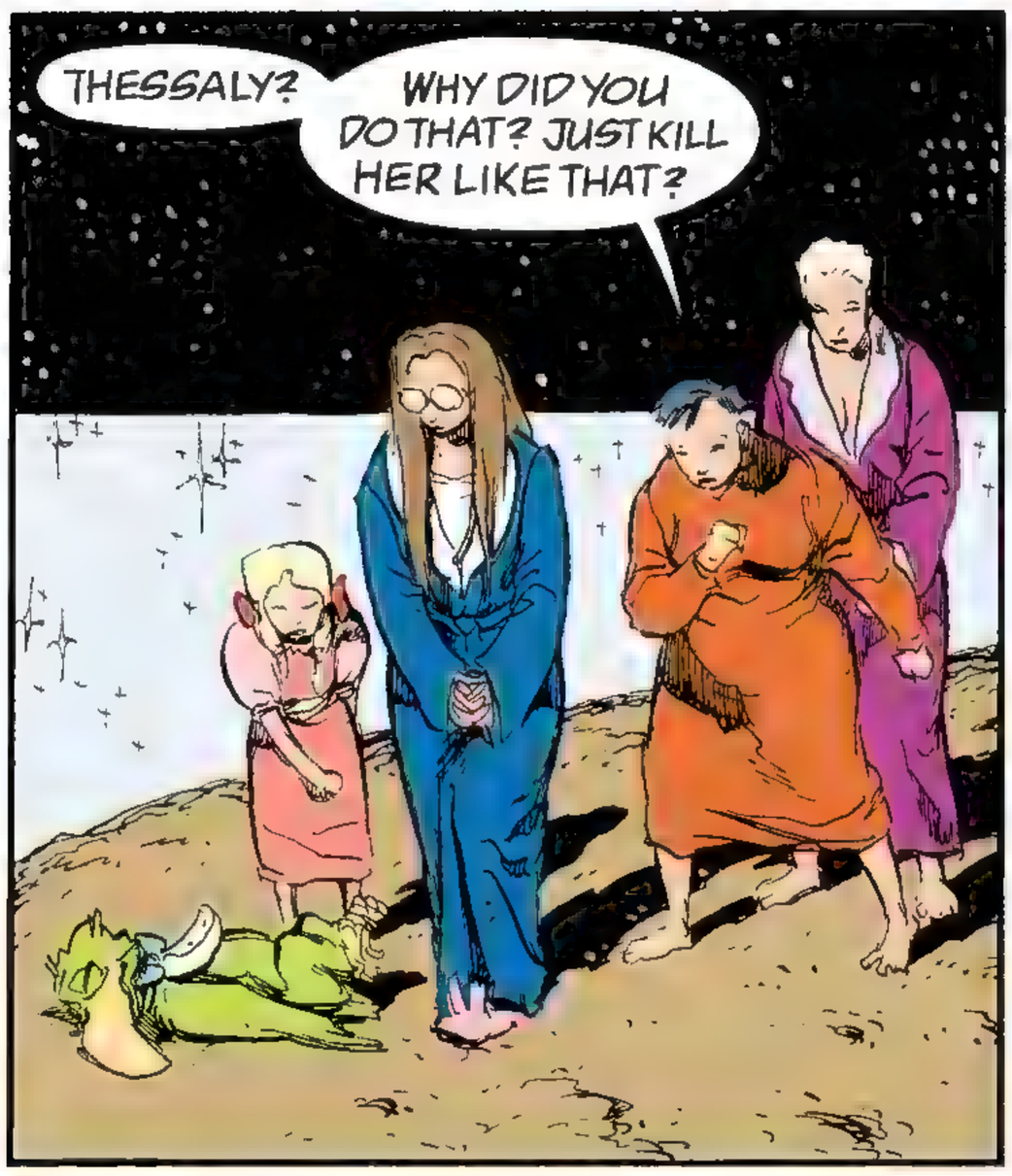
IT SAID IT WANTED TO KILL US. PLEASE HELP ME. SAVE THE PRINCESS.

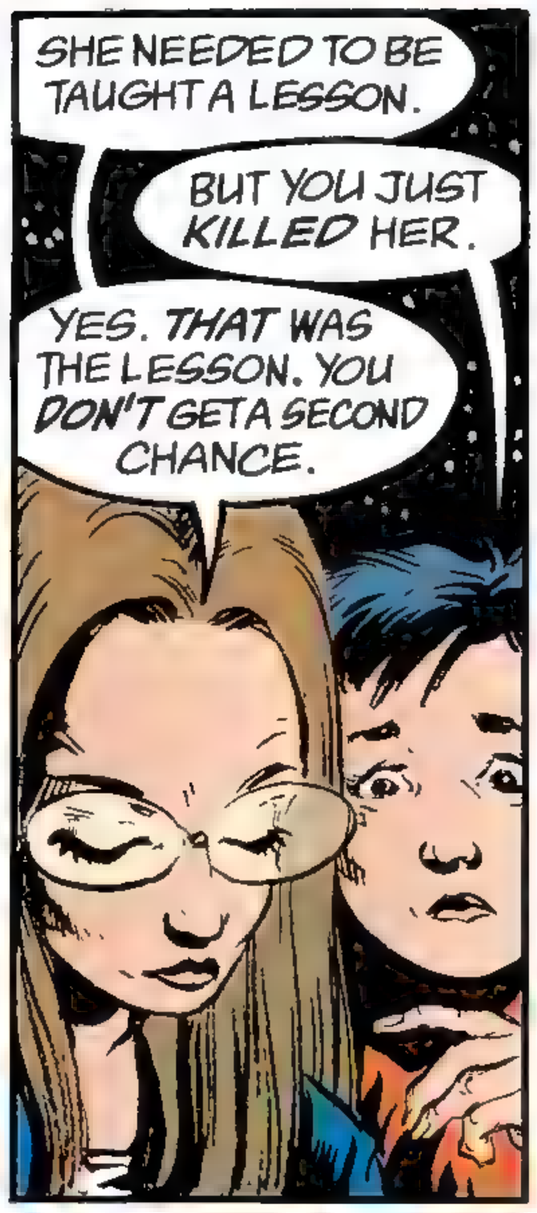



SO YOU'RE THE CUCKOO, THEN?
...yes.






THESSALY?
WHY DID YOU DO THAT? JUST KILL HER LIKE THAT?


SHE NEEDED TO BE TAUGHT A LESSON.
BUT YOU JUST KILLED HER.
YES. THAT WAS THE LESSON. YOU DON'T GET A SECOND CHANCE.

ANYWAY, IF SHE WAS THE KIND OF THING I THINK SHE WAS, YOU DON'T WANT TO TALK TO THEM, OR LET THEM TALK TO YOU.
REALLY?
JUST A FEW SECONDS IS ALL THEY NEED.

YOU'RE VERY CLEVER. YOU REALLY ARE. YOU'RE A VERY CLEVER LADY.

BUT THAT'S ALL THE KILLING YOU'RE GOING TO DO, ISN'T IT?

YES.

HMM. WHAT KIND OF THING ARE YOU? I'VE MET THE FOLK OF THE LAND, AND A FEW PEOPLE LIKE GEORGE WHO TRAVELLED HERE IN THEIR DREAMS. AND PEOPLE FROM BARBIE'S MEMORIES.

YOU DON'T FIT.

NO.

NO MATTER.

YOU PEOPLE ARE SO **WONDERFUL**, SO JOYOUS AND STRANGE. YOU HAVE SECRET WORLDS **INSIDE** YOU. IS IT THAT WAY WITH **ALL** OF YOU?

I THINK YOU THREE SHOULD SIT DOWN NOW, AND NOT MAKE ANY MORE NOISE.

BARBIE? IT'S MOON RISE.

IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO WAKE UP NOW. COME ON.

WHU... WHERE AM I?

THIS IS THE ISLE OF THORNS.

THIS IS WHERE I HAD TO COME WITH THE PORPENTINE, ISN'T IT?

THAT'S RIGHT.

THE HIEROGRAM AND THE PORPENTINE WERE LEFT AS... TOKENS, I THINK... MANY, MANY YEARS AGO. WHILE THEY EXIST, THE LAND STILL LIVES.

THE DESTRUCTION OF **EITHER** OF THEM SIGNALS THE DEATH OF THE LAND...

THE DESTRUCTION OF BOTH **ENSURES** IT.

AND THEN I GET TO LEAVE THE **NEST**.

AND THEN I GET TO **FLY**.

THIS IS BAD STUFF. HOODOO STUFF. YOU DO THIS STUFF?

NO.

THASS GOOD.

THIS IS GEORGE. THIS IS HIS APARTMENT. HE TALKS.

I DON' TALK TO NO DEAD PEOPLE. 'S BAD LUCK.

AND THIS IS BARBIE.

OH YEAH. I KNOW HER--SHE GAVE ME FIFTY CENTS ONNA SUBWAY THIS MORNING, BUT I DROPPED IT...

JESUS! YOU'RE THE I-DON'T-LIKE-DOGS LADY.

DON'T YOU GO TAKIN' THE LORD'S NAME IN VAIN. MY NAME'S MAISIE HILL. MAISIE TO MY FRIENDS.

I'M WANDA.

HMPH. SO WHAT'RE YOU? A GUY OR A GAL?

I'M... I WAS BORN A GUY. AND NOW I'M A GAL. ONLY I HAVEN'T GONE ALL THE WAY...

YEAH. MY GRANDSON, BILLY, WAS LIKE YOU. HE WAS A CUTE LITTLE THING. HE'D SASHAY AROUND SWEET AS ANYTHIN'. HE WAS SAVIN' UP FER THE OPERATION.

HIS MAW USED TO SAY HE WAS THE DAUGHTER SHE'D NEVER HAD.

I WISH MY MOM HAD SAID THAT. SHE SAID I WAS THE SPAWN OF THE DEVIL.

THASS DUMB. JUST BECAUSE SOME-ONE'S DIFFERENT DON'T MAKE 'EM BAD.

SO WHAT HAPPENED TO BILLY?

THEY FOUND HIM INNA MOTEL ROOM IN QUEENS, FIVE YEARS BACK. SOME-ONE HAD CRUSHED IN HIS HEAD WITH A MONKEY-WRENCH. DONE OTHER SHIT TO HIM, HE'D BEEN DEAD FOR LIKE A WEEK.

EVERYONE TOL' HIM NOT TO GO WITH STRANGERS.

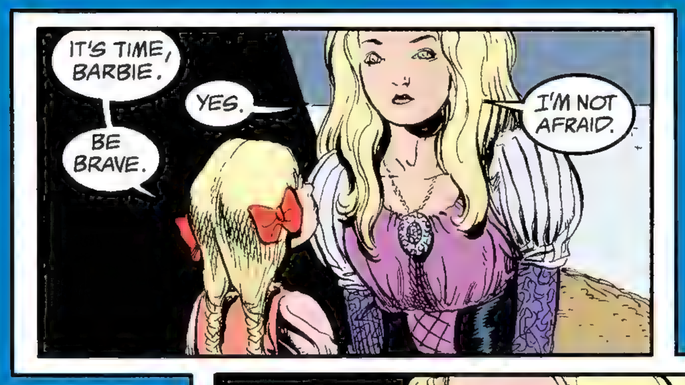
THERE NEVER WAS ANY TELLIN' THAT BOY ANYTHIN'...

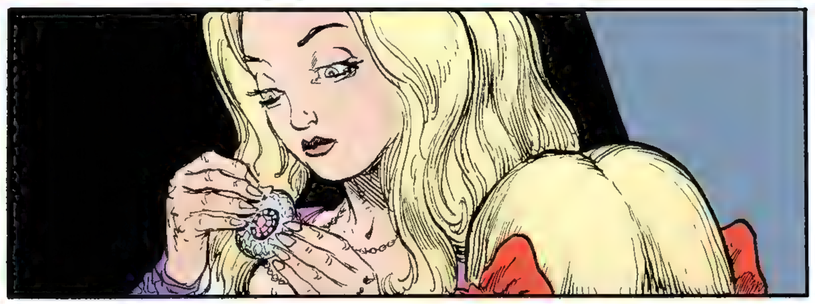
I'M SORRY.

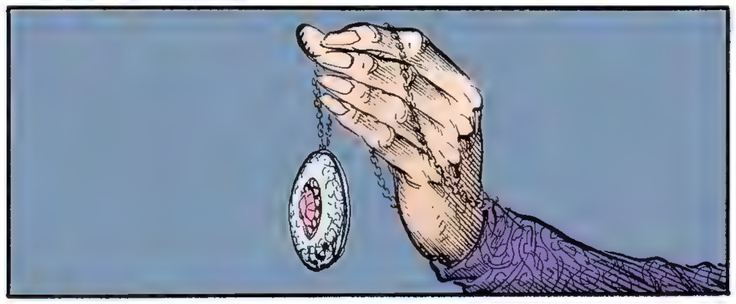
YOU'RE SORRY? HOW'D YOU THINK I FELT?

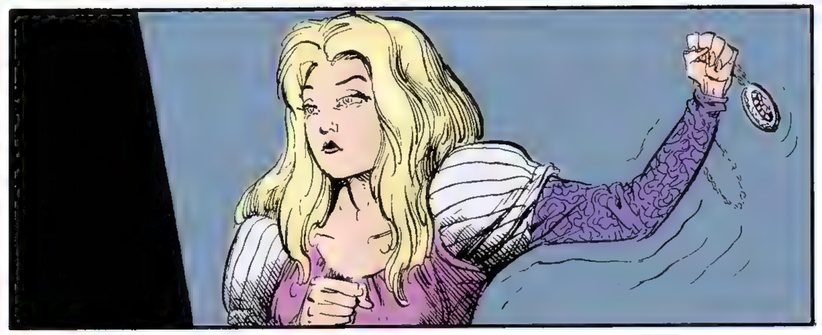
SO WHY DON'T YOU LIKE DOGS?

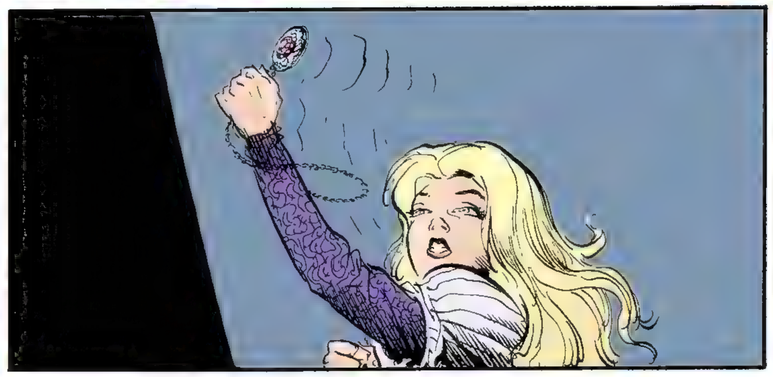
...I JUS' DON'T. THAS ALL.

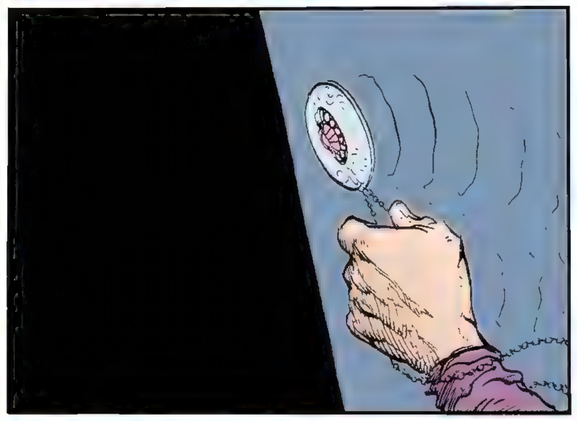

IT'S TIME, BARBIE.
YES.
BE BRAVE.
I'M NOT AFRAID.











I WON! LALLY LALLY...

I WON! I KNEW I WOULD.

I'M THE CLEVEREST AND THE PRETTIEST, AND ONE DAY I'LL BE THE BIGGEST AND THE BRIGHTEST, AND I'LL FLY INTO LITTLE GIRLS' MINDS AND LAY EGGS OF MY OWN THERE...

I WON!

I BEAT ALL OF YOU! LALLY, LALLY LALLY...

I CAN LEAVE SOON. THE PORPENTINE AND THE HIEROGRAM ARE BROKEN. THE LAND IS OVER.

NOW IT STARTS.

AND ONCE THE LAND'S GONE, LALLY, LALLY... I FLY...

OUT OF YOUR DREAMS INTO YOUR LIVES...

I'LL BE BIG AND BEAUTIFUL AND LAY HUNDREDS OF EGGS IN HUNDREDS OF WORLDS.

LOOK, BARBIE. LOOK, YOU THREE. ISN'T IT WONDERFUL?

THE STARS ARE FALLING.

UH-OH.

THAT WAS NEW YORK'S OWN LOU REED WITH "SATELLITE OF LOVE," BRINGING US TO A QUARTER OF FIVE IN THE MORNING.

AND WHILE IT WAS PLAYING A WEATHER FLASH CAME THROUGH, HERE ON ***WRAT***. SEEMS I OWE AN EARLIER CALLER AN APOLOGY.

HURRICANE LISA--THAT'S LISA WITH AN "S"--IS ***INDEED*** HEADING BACK THIS WAY. THE FLASH DESCRIBES THE HURRICANE'S CHANGE OF DIRECTION AS "INEXPLICABLE."

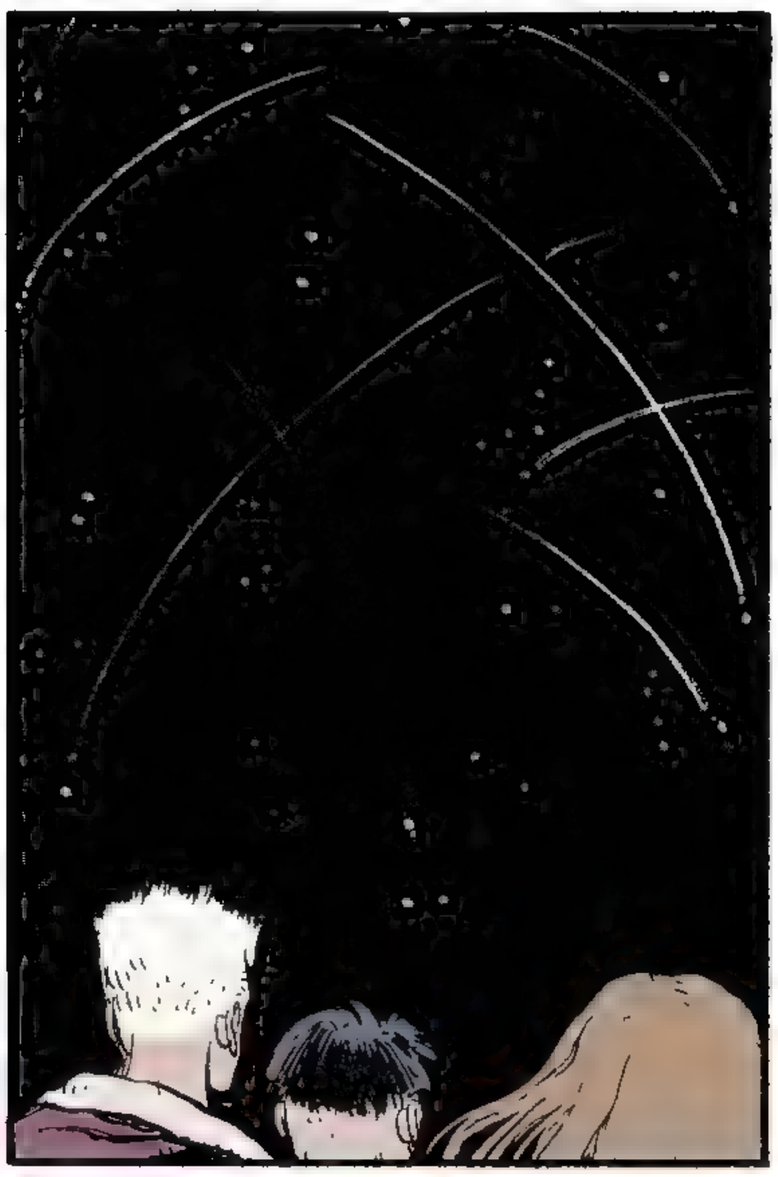
SAYS HERE THE HURRICANE'S CHANGE OF DIRECTION MAY BE DUE IN PART TO SOME PERTURBATIONS IN THE UPPER ATMOSPHERE. METEOROLOGISTS ALSO POINT TO A POSSIBLE HIGH ALTITUDE DUST STORM WHICH HID THE FACE OF THE MOON EARLIER THIS MORNING...

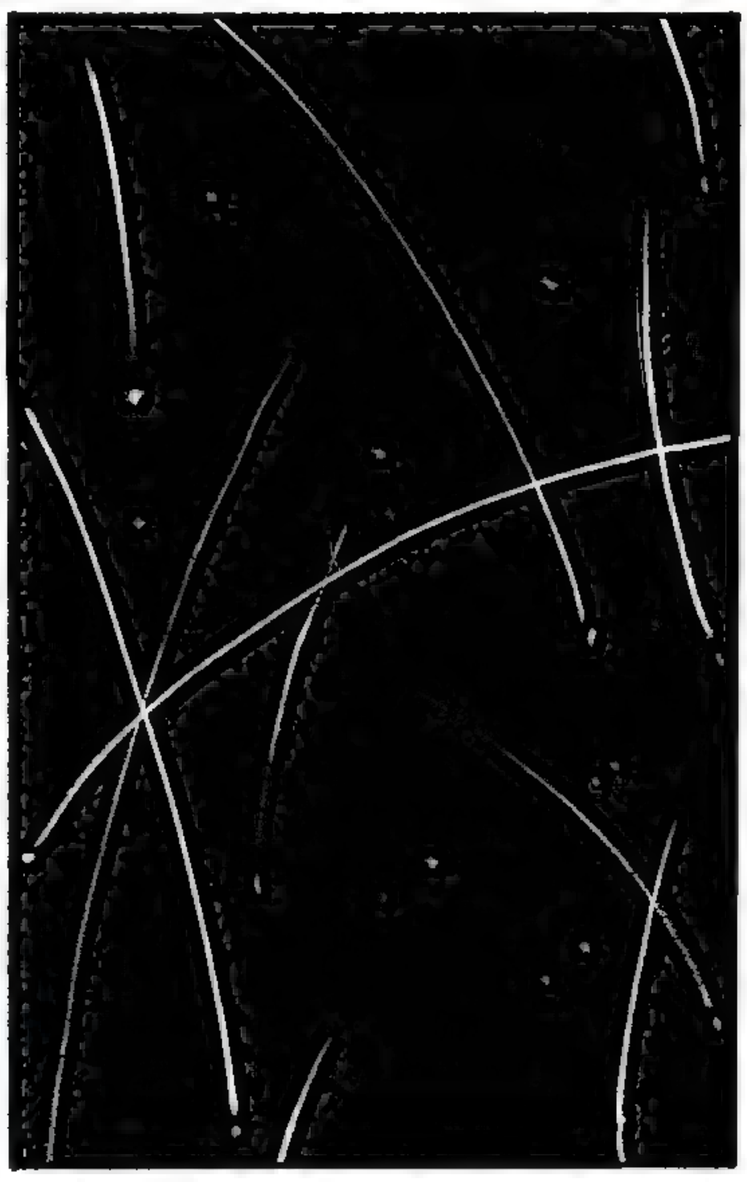
MY ADVICE? STAY HOME. BARBARA WONG, ***WRAT***.

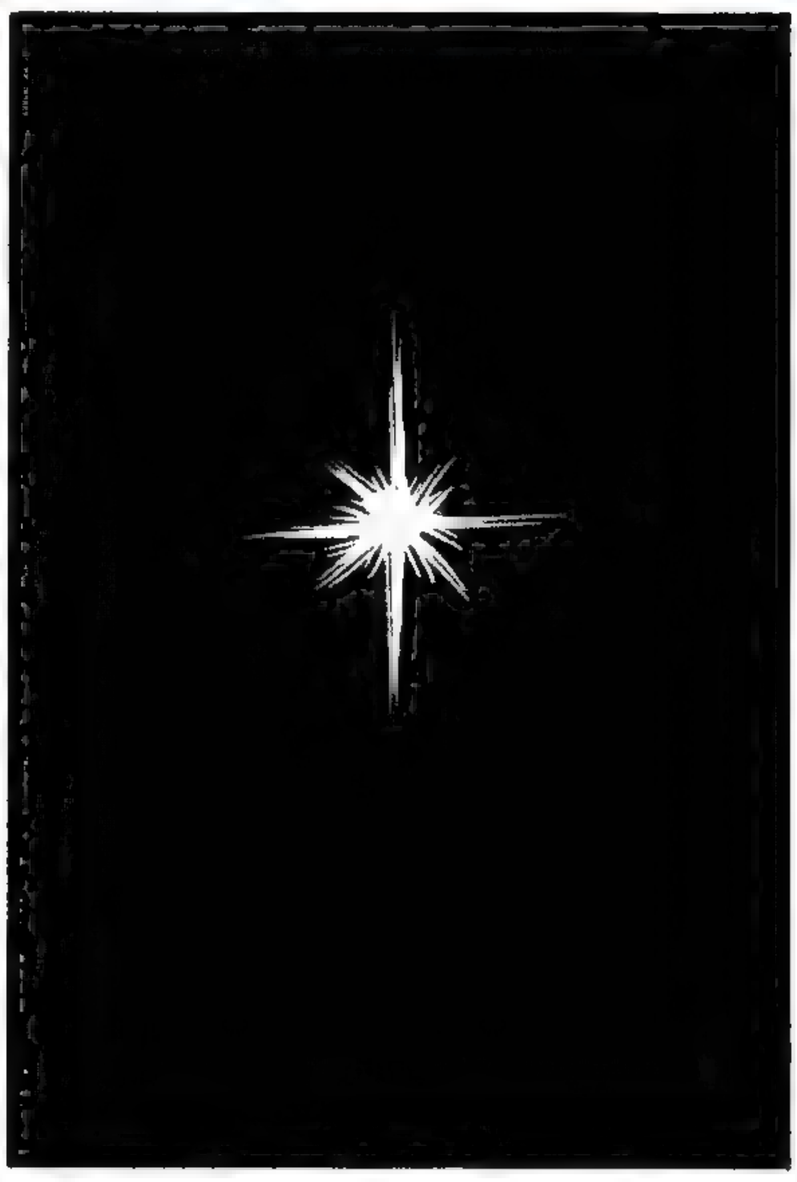
HEY BILL?

YEAH JERRY.

YOU GOT ANY Q-TIPS ON YA?







The time has come, then.

I am here, by the terms of the compact.

Who summoned me? Who calls this skerry to its final judgment?

Who seeks my boon?

WHO ARE YOU? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

A strange question-- did you not call me, young lady?

I was your land's creator.

No, I see she did not summon me.

You did.

Hmm. You are not entirely in control of your own mind...

One moment.

I trust that feels better.

FOX? HAZEL?

THESSALY?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

They cannot answer you.

There.

UM... EXCUSE ME. THE PEOPLE I MET HERE KEPT TALKING ABOUT SOMEONE CALLED MURPHY. IS THAT YOU?

Indeed.

MORPHEUS. MURPHY. HM. YES.

I WOULD HAVE FIGURED THAT OUT.

BARBIE? ARE YOU OKAY? WE CAME TO RESCUE YOU.

Hush now. I need silence from all of you, while I do uncreate this land.

It is an old land, and it is time for it to rest.

HE BEGAN TO TALK, VERY QUIETLY, IN THAT STRANGE VOICE OF HIS, THAT SOUNDED LIKE YOU WERE HEARING IT IN THE BACK OF YOUR HEAD.

I'D HEARD THE PEOPLE TALK ABOUT MURPHY BEFORE, BUT I'D NEVER IMAGINED HE EXISTED.

IT WAS LIKE MEETING GOD, OR SOMEONE LIKE THAT. YOU DON'T FIGURE THEY'RE EVER ACTUALLY GOING TO SHOW UP.

HE WAS VERY TALL, AND VERY BEAUTIFUL, AND VERY DISTANT.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT LANGUAGE THE WORDS WERE IN, BUT I FELT LIKE I OUGHT TO HAVE UNDERSTOOD THEM-- OR RATHER, THAT PART OF ME *DID* UNDERSTAND THEM, ON SOME DEEP, BURIED LEVEL.

HIS CLOAK WAS BLOWING IN THE WIND LIKE A PATCH OF MIDNIGHT, AND HIS EYES GLITTERED LIKE TWIN STARS.

HE SEEMED TO FILL THE WORLD.

NOTHING HAD CHANGED, BUT IT WAS AS IF HE WERE AS BIG AS THE LAND, AND STILL HE WAS SPEAKING. I KNEW THAT IF HE HAD BEEN SPEAKING TO ME I WOULD HAVE UNDERSTOOD...

BUT HE WASN'T SPEAKING TO ME. HE WAS TALKING TO LUZ.

POOR DEAD LUZ, MY LITTLE JUDAS.

I COULD NOT FIND IT IN MY HEART TO BLAME HER: I, TOO, HAD BEEN ONE OF THE SERVANTS OF THE CUCKOO, FELT THE OVERPOWERING NEED TO PROTECT AND NURTURE HER; TO DO ANYTHING THAT WOULD MAKE HER HAPPY.

LUZ GOT UP.

SHE STUMBLED. AND THEN SHE WALKED INTO THE BLACKNESS OF HIS ROBE AND SHE WAS GONE.

MURPHY'S PEACE BE WITH YOU, LUZ. IF HE HAS PEACE TO GIVE.

HE CONTINUED TALKING.

AND THEY CAME.

HUNDREDS OF THEM. THOUSANDS OF THEM. WALKING AND MARCHING, SOME OF THEM DANCING DOWN THE CAUSEWAY TOWARD THE ISLE OF THORNS.

THERE WERE GIANTS AND CENTAURS AND WITCHES AND FAUNS; BEARS AND TROLLS; EVEN A HANDFUL OF GIANT SPIDERS. I SAW WILKINSON AND PRINADO, WALKING TOGETHER. THEY WAVED WHEN THEY SAW ME.

THEY WALKED PAST ME, THE LIVING AND THE DEAD, AND ONE BY ONE THEY VANISHED INTO THE DARKNESS OF HIS CLOAK.

THEN THERE WERE OTHERS WALKING PAST. DIFFERENT WONDERFUL CHARACTERS -- SOLDIERS AND COURTIERS, YOUNGEST SONS AND CATS-IN-BOOTS: THESE WEREN'T THE INHABITANTS OF *MY* LAND.

THESE WERE SOMEONE ELSE'S PEOPLE -- SOME EARLIER PRINCESS'S ESCAPE FROM REALITY...

DID HE BECOME HUGE?

OR DID THEY BECOME TINY AS THEY REACHED HIM?

DID SUCH CONCEPTS EVEN APPLY?

THE LAST ONE WAS THE SADDEST.

SHE WAS MAGNIFICENT. SHE LOOKED VERY PROUD AND VERY SAD. AND WHEN SHE GOT TO HIM, SHE HESITATED.

I am here, Alianora. By the terms of the compact.

I SEE. AND WHAT NOW?

HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN?

Now it ends.

A long time, old love. Your land has been home to many since your day.

SHE CURTSIED TO HIM, HE BOWED TO HER, AND SHE WAS GONE.

AND THEN HE REACHED OUT HIS HAND AND PICKED UP THE LAND.

I DON'T KNOW HOW...

IT WAS LIKE A LITTLE JEWELLED WORLD.

IT DIDN'T MATTER THAT IT WAS TINY-- IF IT ***WAS*** TINY. I COULD SEE EVERY WATERFALL AND STREAM, EVERY LEAF ON EVERY TREE.

I COULD SEE EVERYTHING.

AND THEN IT CRUMBLED IN HIS HAND.

IT WAS JUST DUST...

SAND...

A GLITTERING, MULTICOLORED SAND THAT FELL AWAY INTO THE CHILLY WIND AT THE END OF THE WORLD.

THERE WAS NOTHING LEFT OF MY LAND ANYMORE--A DEAD SKY WENT ON FOREVER ABOVE US AND BELOW.

IT WAS OVER.

HE STOOD THERE IN SILENCE, LOOKING VERY TIRED, VERY ALONE. I FELT REALLY SORRY FOR HIM AND I DIDN'T KNOW WHY.

UM. ARE YOU OKAY?

Endings are mixed blessings, Princess Barbara.

But, yes, I am okay. I thank you for asking.

There. Half the compact is discharged.

Now.

I wonder if you three know the trouble you've caused.

Hmm, I know you, do I not?

I DON'T BELIEVE SO.

I do.

Yes. We have met before, witch woman.

IT WAS A *LONG* TIME AGO, DREAM KING. I'M SURPRISED YOU REMEMBER.

There were more of you then.

YES. NOW IT'S ONLY ME.

Why aren't you dead?

OH, LOOK, DON'T *YOU* START. IT'S A LONG STORY, AND I DON'T REALLY WANT TO GO INTO IT.

I see.

DREAM KING. THAT ONE THERE IS MY LEGITIMATE PREY-- SHE WHO CALLS HERSELF THE CUCKOO.

SHE ATTEMPTED TO *HARM* ME.

HER LIFE IS MINE.

No, her life is her own.

SHE WOULD HAVE HARMED ME, MORPHEUS. I *DEMAND* MY RIGHTS.

You DEMAND?

Thessalian. The moon has tumbled into the sea, in this place. It cannot take you or your followers back to the waking world.

You are a trespasser, here without my consent.

I am very displeased.

WHAT'S HE *SAYING*, THESS?

I am saying, young lady, that you are here entirely--

HE'S SAYING WE'RE IN *TROUBLE*.

REAL TROUBLE?

Yes. Real trouble.

But then, you are far from alone in that...

UH MISS WANDA?

HI GEORGE. YOU'RE TALKING AGAIN, THEN?

YOU MAKE HIM HOLD HIS *TONGUE*, LADY. HE AIN'T A NATURAL THING.

IF SHE UH WANTED ME TO UH HOLD MY TONGUE THEN SHE'D HAVE TO DO IT FOR ME BECAUSE I DON'T HAVE ANY HANDS.

THAT'S KIND OF MY UH SORT OF JOKE.

THAT'S RIGHT, GEORGE.

IT DIFFERS FROM THE *USUAL* KIND OF JOKE ONLY IN THE VAST GULF BETWEEN IT AND ANY KIND OF A SENSE OF HUMOR.

SO WHAT'S *HAPPENING?*

IF YOU'RE UH GOING TO BE UH *MEAN* TO ME I UH WON'T TELL YOU.

I'M SORRY, GEORGE. TELL US *WHAT?*

UH WELL, ABOUT THE REALLY HEAVY STUFF. IT'S UH ALL REALLY GETTING BAD NOW.

I UH CAN'T FEEL THE LAND ANY MORE. OR THE UH CUCKOO. IT'S ALL MOVED AWAY.

WHAT ABOUT *BARBIE?* AND FOX AND HAZEL?

MAYBE THEY'RE *DEAD*. I UH DON'T REALLY KNOW. THEY'VE UH GONE.

JESUS WEPT. *YEAH*. THAT'S BAD STUFF, ALL RIGHT.

THAT'S UH NOT THE *REALLY* BAD STUFF.

THE REALLY BAD STUFF IS THE UH *STORM*. IT'S NOT JUST A STORM ANY MORE.

AND UH THIS IS A PRETTY *OLD* BUILDING.

GEORGE, *WHAT* ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY?

LADY...

End of Chapter Five

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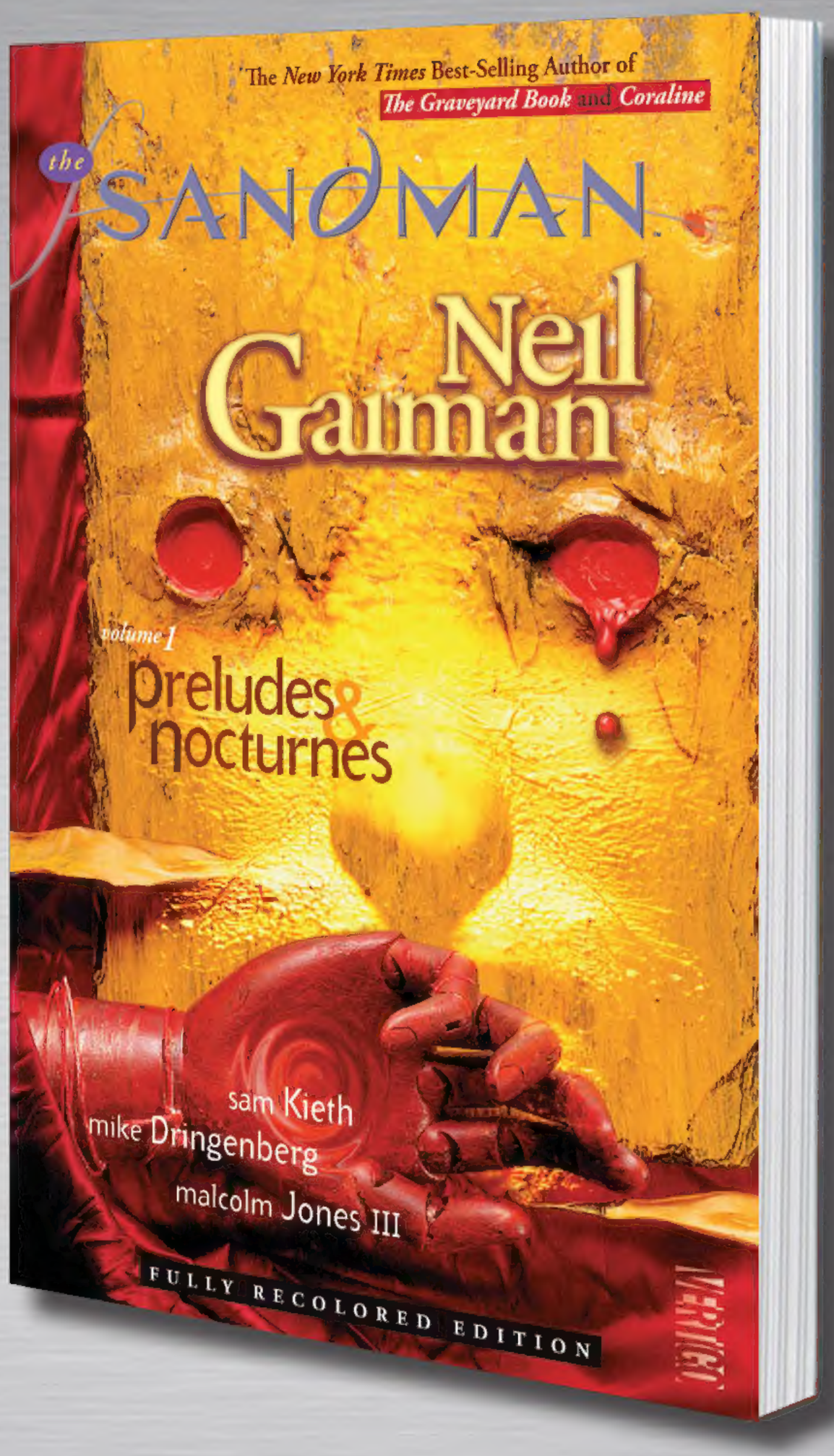
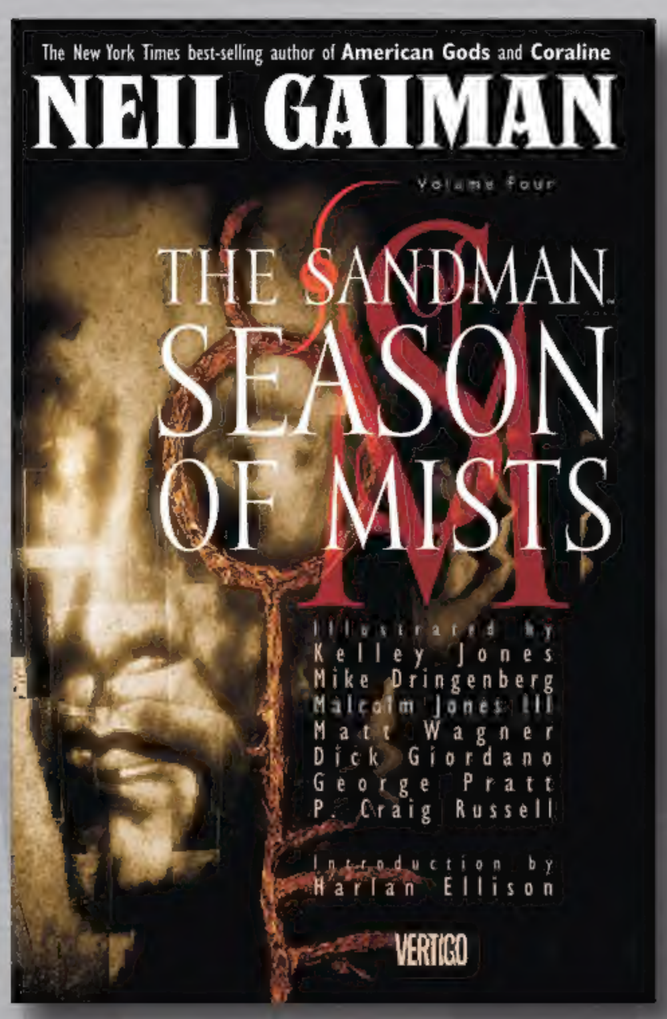
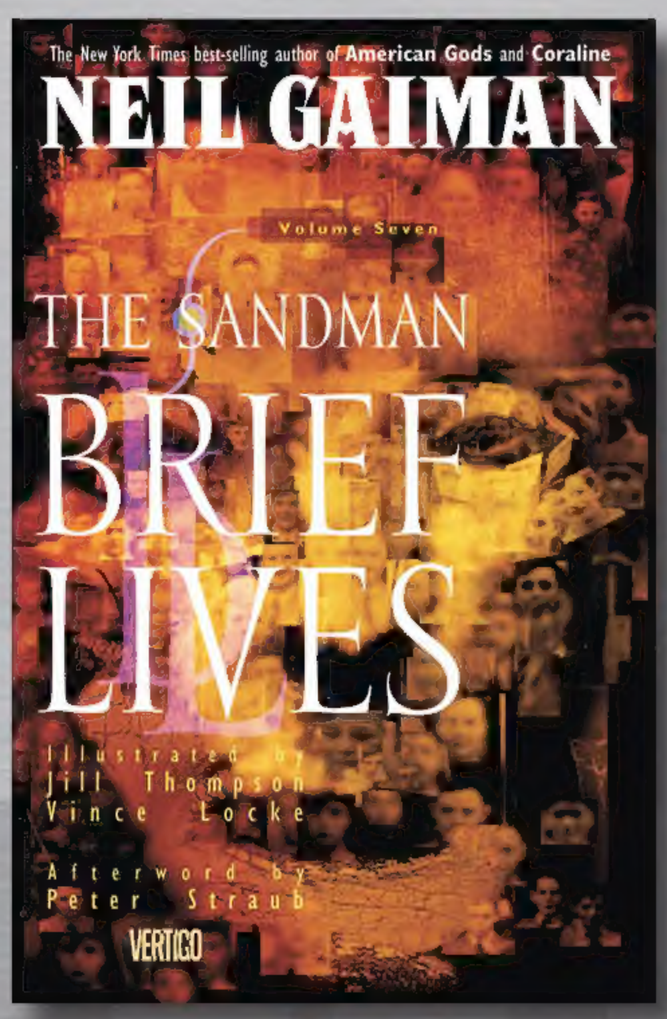


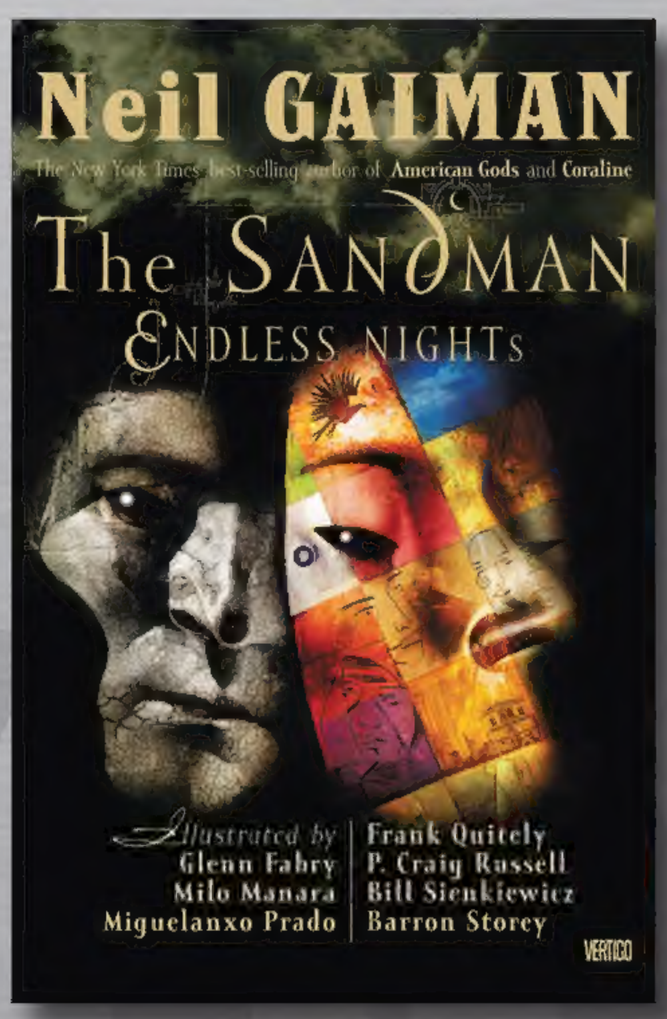
THE SANDMAN VOL. 4:
SEASON OF MISTS



THE SANDMAN VOL. 7:
BRIEF LIVES



THE SANDMAN:
ENDLESS NIGHTS



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